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Incorporation and Dissociation: Changes in the A/B Structure between Realism and Modernism

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1 Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to explore the possible relationships between layer A (or *view,* consisting of elements present in the reality of a text) and layer B (or *vision,* consisting of elements absent from it) in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse,* John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and Samuel Beckett's *Endgame.* By determining the relationship between these layers in the above works, it is attempted to verify the hypothesis that from the era of Realism to that of Symbolism, this relationship is characterized by *vision's* gradual incorporation of the *view* layer of the text. I also suggest that by Beckett's (Post-)Modernism, the two layers are dissociated again.

Apart from merely determining the A/B structures of the four texts, the essay also shows that the characteristics of layers A and B are directly related to other features of the works, including the use of rhetorical figures, word selection, techniques of narration and world-view.

2 Introduction

This paper aims at investigating the relationship between *view* and *vision* in various literary texts, that is, between elements which are present in the reality created by the text *(view)* and elements which are merely conjured up by it *(vision).* Following Éva Babits's suggestions, I presuppose that the qualities of this relationship, of the so-called A/B structure—like other, general properties of a literary work (e.g. the relationship between the author and their persona)—are largely determined by the artistic period the text was written in; and that from Realism to approximately the era of Symbolism, this relationship is determined by a tendency for vision to gradually incorporate the view part of the text.[1] According to my observations, after Symbolism, which achieved a total unification of the two, an era of dissociation of view and vision seems to have set in.

Naturally, such a broad generalization cannot be proved in the strict sense, thus what this paper aims at is merely to illustrate the above thesis by investigating view and vision in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse,* John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and Samuel Beckett's *Endgame.* The four works were selected in a way that the two novels and the two plays show a number of analogies providing valid grounds for the comparative analyses, and that their A/B structures be dissimilar enough so that the differences and their effects can be easily traced. With the help of these four works, it will be also attempted to show that the A/B structure of a literary text is closely related to its other features, including the use of rhetoric figures, the selection of descriptive elements, the structure of the narrative, and the expressed world-view.

The two main parts of the essay contain two comparisons of the two novels and the two one-act plays. In each part, I shall consider the similarities between the works, which make the comparison possible and possibly meaningful, then I will point out differences in the view

[1] I encountered these suggestions during regular discussions with É. Babits between 1997 and 2001. They may well strike the reader as overgeneralizations, especially from a postmodern perspective; however, as I shall argue in this paper, it is not absolutely unfounded to draw a parallel between two generalizations: the features of the two extensive structures, layers A and B and common tendencies of literary works 'belonging' to the same artistic period.

/ vision structure of the texts. After the main structural dissimilarity has been established, an attempt will be made to relate it to further characteristic qualities of the texts and to various suggestions by other critical analyses.

Following the terminology introduced by Éva Babits, *layer A* and *layer B* will be used from now on to denote view and vision, respectively. Thus layer A consists of all elements in a text that can be physically present in the reality created by it, while layer B hosts all elements that cannot. This paper will also follow Babits's views in suggesting that rhetorical figures like similes and metaphors usually connect elements from both layers. For example, in the simile *his hand was as dry as a camel's back after a week's journey in the Sahara,* "his hand," present in the reality of the text, is on layer A, while "camel's back," "journey," "Sahara," etc. must reside on layer B. This example also shows that elements on layer B (the describer layer) usually describe elements on layer A (the described layer).

Rephrasing my thesis using the above terminology, my expectation is to find that, moving from Defoe to Synge, layer B becomes more and more important until it penetrates, and, in the Symbolism of Synge's play, partly takes over the role of layer A. According to its A/B structure, *To the Lighthouse* has to be classified as a pre-symbolic work, even though it was written 23 years after *Riders to the Sea.* Entering the modern era with Beckett's *Endgame,* it is found that the union of the two layers, which, as I shall attempt to show, is closely connected to the creation of myths, is no longer feasible: layers A and B are equally important, and stand strictly separated. The various relationships between the two layers are represented in the following table:

Realism	Pre-Symbolism	Symbolism	Modernism
Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe,* 1719	Woolf: *To the Lighthouse,* 1927	Synge: *Riders to the Sea,* 1904	Beckett: *Endgame,* 1957
A | b	a–B	b←B	A | B

3 From Realism to Pre-Symbolism: Defoe and Woolf

In this section, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is compared to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from the point of view of the different techniques used in the two novels to create a valid and coherent image of reality. It will be argued that the techniques of the novels to create a more or less complete model of reality differ significantly: while Defoe appears to achieve this end by enriching layer A, Woolf seems to place reality as a whole on layer B.

First, let me consider the similarities between the two works. When investigating novels which try to portray (a certain kind of) reality, one may also consider the realness of the personalities displayed. E. M. Forster, investigating Jane Austen's works, argues that valid, or, as he calls them, round characters are "ready for an extended life,"[2] and cannot be characterized by one single idea. Based on this definition, it could be suggested that the roundness of a figure can be determined in a sufficiently objective way by investigating the positivity or negativity[3] of their deeds and qualities, as I argue that one of the signs of roundness is a balance

[2] E. M. Forster, "Flat and Round Characters and 'Point of View'," in *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader,* ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), 137–145, p. 142.

[3] Although in general, it might be difficult to draw a borderline between the moral–aesthetic categories of 'positive' and 'negative', in the case of simple utterances and actions a proper categorization might be agreed on based on the fact that the given element is judged similarly by readers belonging to the same period and culture—to the same "interpretative community." (Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum,*" in *Modern Criticism*

between these two types of elements. This is because a flat character, being built out of a sole idea or quality,[4] necessarily inherits the aesthetic and moral values of that idea—and in turn, these values will dominate all appearances of the figure in a novel. In short, a biased, unreal, that is, a flat character will necessarily lack the positive–negative balance, which entails that a balanced character is round in the Forsterian sense.

Defoe's Crusoe has a finely balanced personality. Regarding religion and accepting authority, although he disobeys his father's advice (–), he repents doing so and turns to God when falling ill (+). Regarding social relationships, although he manages to escape from slavery with the help of Xury (+), he sells him to the captain of a Portuguese ship, feeling only momentary guilt (–). Also, he saves the life of Friday (+), but makes him his servant and forces his own culture upon him (–). In parentheses, I indicated the possible positivity / negativity assigned to these events by a present-day reader.[5] Overall, from this brief list, it can be seen that almost every element on one end of the scale has its counterpart on the other. This fact gives Crusoe a complex, believable personality.

This balance of values can also be found in *To the Lighthouse.* Even the character of Augustus Carmichael, which is certainly not the most elaborated one, is precisely balanced. Here two scales might as well be considered: one is whether a certain element calls for the reader's sympathy or not; the other is the one explained above, the overall positive / negative value assigned to the event. In the case of this character, it turns out that the elements are balanced according to both scales:

value sympathy	+	–
+	reading Virgil[6] achieving success finally[7]	should have been a philosopher[8] being turned out,[9] poverty[10]
×	educated in Oxford, traveling to India, translating poetry[11]	murmuring or saying nothing[12] not trusting Mrs. Ramsay[13]

Similar statistics may show the balance of other figures in Woolf's novel. Thus, from the investigation of the balance of positive and negative elements, it can be seen that the two novels share, and even appear to strive for realism in the portrayal of characters.

Another aspect in which the novels show similarity is the use and importance of retrospection. In *Robinson Crusoe*, retrospection enables the protagonist to reinterpret his deeds in the past: for example, he reaches the conclusion that despite being wrecked on a desert island, he can consider himself lucky and that God loves him;[14] his vision makes him consider his

and Theory: A Reader, ed. David Lodge [London and New York: Longman, 1988], 311–329, pp. 325–329.)

[4] Forster, "Flat and Round Characters," p. 138.

[5] Converting savages to the Western (English) culture and customs might have been considered positive by readers contemporary with the novel. However, here and elsewhere I strove to base my analyses on the readings of a constructed, modern reader derived from my own experiences.

[6] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Grafton, 1977), p. 137.

[7] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* pp. 146–147.

[8] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 16.

[9] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 47.

[10] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 16.

[11] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 16.

[12] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 16, p. 47.

[13] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 47.

[14] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 80.

wrong decisions in the past,[15] etc. As one of the most important aspects of the text is to display the development of Crusoe's personality, these retrospective passages seem to have a crucial function in the novel. Pushing this statement to the extreme, it can be suggested that these retrospections convey the inherent meaning, the 'message' of the work (provided such a thing can be considered to be existent).

The timeline of *To the Lighthouse* is similarly full of retrospections. The description of Charles Tansley (and his behavior in picture galleries),[16] the story of the marriage of Mr. Carmichael or that of the father of Charles Tansley[17] could be cited as examples. As the majority of information about the characters (and even about the events) are conveyed by these retrospections, the structure of the novel can be said to resemble that of an analytic play, in which the past of the plot unfolds itself concurrently with the present events. Based on the overwhelming amount of retrospective passages, the suggestion could be risked that the part of true importance in *To the Lighthouse* is contained in these retrospections.

In other words, based on the balanced portrayal of characters, the novels seem to share an effort to be 'real'; both of them make use of retrospection often, and retrospective passages appear to contribute most to the overall 'meaning' of the texts. Turning to the investigation of the dissimilarity between their A/B structures, it turns out that many differences can be traced in phenomena related to these shared qualities.

There seems to be one inherent and consistent difference between the retrospections in Defoe's novel and those in Woolf's text, namely, that in *Robinson Crusoe,* retrospections usually refer to events that happened during the time of the novel, that is, they do not point outside the story, while in the other novel, the opposite is true. The observation about Defoe's case is in accordance with the above suggestion that the main function of retrospection in that novel is to enable the protagonist to reinterpret his previous deeds. In *To the Lighthouse,* however, the points in time retrospections refer to are usually outside the time of the novel: such events happened before the narrative had started. A good example for this proposal can be the following excerpt: "Whenever she 'thought of his work' she always saw clearly before her a large kitchen table. It was Andrew's doing. She asked him what his father's books were about. [...] 'Think of a kitchen table then,' he told her, 'when you're not there.' "[18]

Based on this difference, it can be suggested that elements in retrospections used by Defoe are on layer A, as they are much more closely related to the here-and-now events of the novel than retrospective elements in *To the Lighthouse,* where the time-gap between the present time and the elements evoked is so wide that it necessarily forces retrospections onto layer B.

This observation, in turn, leads to the conclusion that elements which contribute most to the function of the texts reside on layer A in the case of *Robinson Crusoe,* while they are placed on layer B in *To the Lighthouse.* This suggestion, as I shall argue below, is in accordance with the A/B structure of the novels as determined by the usage of figures and attributes in descriptions.

Considering the use of adjectives and other attributes, it can be suggested that Defoe, compared to Woolf, employed few and general ones. In a long description of the shipwreck, I found the following attributes: *greater, high, small, hang, low*$^{+}$*, great*$^{++}$*, bulged, hard, lifted up, free*$^{+}$*, dry*$^{+}$*, spoiled, untouched, disposed, large, necessary.*[19] In the description of the

[15] Defoe, pp. 102–104.

[16] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 14.

[17] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 18.

[18] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 29.

[19] Defoe, pp. 67–68. The description in question starts with the clause "but when I came to the ship…," continues till the end of the paragraph and occupies 294 words. Past participles are included in the list. Recurring words are marked with an appropriate number of plus signs. *Hang,* for syntactic reasons, is considered to

imaginary kitchen-table in *To the Lighthouse,* half as long as Defoe's, the following ones can be found: *scrubbed*[+]*, painful, silver-bossed, fish-shaped, phantom*, grained, knotted, bare, muscular, angular, lovely, flamingo*, blue, silver, white, four-legged, finest, ordinary.*[20] These words are less general in the sense that they are more capable of evoking a wide range of associations. For example, it is easier to visualize a leaf described as fish-shaped than a cabin described solely by the adjective *great.* By the use of attributes, then, Woolf created a more vivid, more visual reality than Defoe.

However, Defoe used a different technique to overcome this seeming defect in the use of attributes: word-doubling. He often employed pairs of nouns or adjectives instead of only one. In the description of a cave, he used: "vault or cave", "cavity or grotto", "sides or roof", "damp or wet" only within a couple of lines.[21] Other examples from the record of one of the expeditions are: "very ripe and rich", "fluxes and feavers", "cure or dry", "dried grapes or raisins", "as wholesom as agreeable."[22] (A few more examples are underlined in passages quoted below.) This method, like mentioning concrete data, might be a result of Defoe's goal to display a concrete, believable reality without unnecessary illusionistic details.

It is important to realize that Defoe used word-pairs instead of imagery or poetic (rhetoric) figures: similes or metaphors can be found only scarcely in his text. While in a figure, one element, which is present at the place and time of description is usually compared to another which is not (see the example given after the definition of layers A and B), in the case of Defoe's word-pairs, both elements are present here-and-now: they are merely synonyms.[23] In other words, no element is placed on layer B in *Robinson Crusoe,* while, as can be seen from the extensive use of figures (for example, "lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one;"[24] also consider the above listed nouns used as adjectives, resulting in metaphors), Woolf's text places a considerable portion of the elements there. This conclusion is in total accordance with the placement of retrospections suggested above.

In order to support the idea further that in *To the Lighthouse,* the emphasis falls on elements taken from the past and thus placed on layer B while in *Robinson Crusoe,* even retrospections are more related to the present, let me investigate descriptions in both novels.

An interesting similarity between the texts is that neither contains exclusively descriptive passages. In Woolf's case, descriptions are usually flows of thoughts of a character, therefore they are frequently disrupted by memories of narrative nature. One example for this phenomenon can be the short description of a painting of Mr. Bankes: "The largest picture in his drawing-room, which *painters had praised, and valued at a higher price than he had given for it,* was of the cherry trees in blossom on the banks of Kennet."[25] The clauses in italics are narrative, occupying more than the half of this very brief description. Similarly, in *Robinson Crusoe,* descriptions of Crusoe's environment are often mixed with the narrative of his actions: "On the bank of this brook *I found* many pleasant savana's or meadows, plain, smooth, and covered with grass; and on the rising parts of them next to the higher grounds, where the water, *as it might be supposed*, never overflowed, *I found* a great deal of tobacco, green, and

function as a participle.

[20] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 30. All adjectives are considered in the paragraph starting with "So she always saw…"; past participles are included; nouns used as adjectives are marked with asterisks. This section is 145 words long.

[21] Defoe, p. 184.

[22] Defoe, p. 113.

[23] Some word-pairs may have a causal relationship ("cure or dry") or may list different things ("sides or roof"), but even in these cases, the synonymic relationship is considered dominant.

[24] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 10.

[25] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* p. 60, emphasis added.

growing to a great and very strong stalk."[26] The description here is actually embedded into a record of Crusoe's deeds.

While in *To the Lighthouse,* narrative elements in descriptions are usually memories (a story, or habits of a character) and therefore they refer to the past, in *Robinson Crusoe,* narrations in descriptions mainly refer to present actions of the protagonist. This difference is again strikingly similar to the different nature of retrospections in the two novels; and by suggesting that memories in Woolf's text occupy a place on layer B while Crusoe's here-and-now actions are on layer A, this dissimilarity can be also related to the suggestion that layer B is elaborated to very different degrees in the two works.

Returning to the suggested placement of retrospections, it is now possible to relate the different degrees of elaboratedness of layers B to the way the novels function, to how they convey the 'meaning' coded into them. It has been argued that it is the retrospective passages which contribute most to the overall effect of the novels, thus, based on where these passages are placed, it can be suggested that, figuratively speaking, the 'meaning' is generated on layer A in *Robinson Crusoe,* while it is on layer B in *To the Lighthouse.*

Based partly on the apparent effort of the novels to create valid and real characters and partly on secondary sources available on Woolf's oeuvre, I risk the suggestion that it is one of the central functions of these novels to create valid models of reality. If this is so, then the difference between Defoe's realism and Woolf's pre-symbolism can be determined: reality (as such) seems to be created on layer A in *Robinson Crusoe,* while it appears to be evoked on layer B in *To the Lighthouse.* This is the inherent structural difference which manifests in many ways accounted for above.

It is worth trying to relate these findings based on almost exclusively the texts of the novels to other analyses and self-reflective authorial remarks in order to test whether the discovered structural difference can account for some elements in the experience of readers and the expressed goals of the authors.

The conclusion that Woolf appears to attempt to place the model of reality on layer B seems to answer her suggestion that "the point of interest lies very likely in the dark places of psychology,"[27] as flows of consciousness, being distant from the here-and-now of the text, more naturally fit into layer B. Defoe, who followed the opposite technique, is not surprisingly classified by Woolf as a "truth-teller,"[28] whose novel is dominated by "reality, fact, substance,"[29] that is, by layer A. Moreover, the distinction based on the relative importance of one layer over the other may well serve as an explanation as to what Virginia Woolf meant by materialism,[30] where all the figures are "dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour"[31]—that is, where the model of reality seems to be built out of here-and-now elements.

[26] Defoe, p. 112, emphasis added. The intermingled nature of narration and description—the "two antithetical attitudes to the world and to existence" (temporal and spatial)—in the novels may also be related to their perceived effort to create comprehensive models of reality incorporating both possible apporaches. (Gérard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse,* trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Columbia UP, 1982], p. 136, see also pp. 133–137.)

[27] Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader,* ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), 86–91, p. 90.

[28] Quoted in René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950; Volume 5: English Criticism, 1900–1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 78. from "Phases of Fiction" (1929).

[29] Virginia Woolf, "Robinson Crusoe," in *The Second Common Reader,* <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c2/chapter4.html> (cited 23 March 2005), paragraph 4.

[30] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," p. 87.

[31] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," p. 88.

My finding also appears to be in accord with Forster's critique of Woolf's characters, that they "do live, but not continuously,"[32] which, according to Wellek, is a common view. It has been shown that the characters in *To the Lighthouse* cannot be flat, hence the first part of Forster's observation, while Woolf's method to display reality through atomic associations and on a different level may well be the reason why Forster felt this living to be non-continuous. However, it is doubtful that the question whether Woolf's characters are capable for an extended life, as required of round characters by Forster,[33] is meaningful to ask since their history is defined on a different layer than the usual.

It is still to be seen what made it possible for Woolf to overcome the constraint of probability,[34] and whether any techniques can be found in her novel which make the readers accept her very likely new approach. Indeed, there is one apparent technique: namely, that Woolf does not enable the reader to identify with any of the characters. In *Robinson Crusoe,* the consistent 1st person verbs move the narrator closer to the protagonist (actually equaling the two) and force the reader to identify with him (consider the following sentence: "*My* next work was to view the country, and seek a proper place for *my* habitation, and where to stow *my* goods to secure them from whatever might happen"[35]). Woolf herself described Defoe's technique of narration: "everything is seen precisely as it appears to Robinson Crusoe. The waves, the seamen, the sky, the ship—all are seen through those shrewd, middle-class, unimaginative eyes."[36] However, in *To the Lighthouse,* the almost exclusively 3rd person verbs, the many instances of free indirect discourse move the characters close to the narrator, and away from the reader. The following sentence, beginning as a direct discourse and ending in a free indirect one is a good example for this phenomenon: " '[And] now stand up, and let me measure your leg,' for they might go to the Lighthouse after all, and she must see if the stocking did not need to be an inch or two longer in the leg."[37] The frequent changes in the viewpoints (as the narration follows the flows of consciousness of various characters) and the fact that no special emphasis is placed on any of the figures (Mrs. Ramsay, the apparently most important and most elaborated character, simply disappears from the novel) also makes it impossible for the reader to identify with any of Woolf's figures.

The lack of identification, in turn, may raise awareness in the reader, who seems to be encouraged to watch the characters and the techniques of the novel critically. It could be suggested that it is this very technique which enabled Woolf to overcome the burden of probability: once a distance has been established between the novel and the reader, there is no necessity to create a world which meets the expectations of the reader fully. This suggestion is also in accord with what Virginia Woolf set before herself as a goal. Wellek suggests that according to her, a good novelist should control sympathy,[38] or, in her own words, "[the] barrier between us and the book [should be] raised higher."[39]

Overall, the basic structural difference between *Robinson Crusoe* and *To the Lighthouse* not only accounts for the various dissimilarities between the novels, which, otherwise, appear to share many features; but also appears to be consistent with Woolf's expressed goals, Forster's critical remarks on Woolf's, and Woolf's remarks on Defoe's work.

[32] E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest* (n.p.: Penguin, 1967), pp. 144, 149. Quoted in Wellek, p. 87.

[33] Forster, "Flat and Round Characters," p. 142.

[34] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," p. 88.

[35] Defoe, p. 71, emphasis added.

[36] Woolf, "Robinson Crusoe," paragraph 5.

[37] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, p. 33.

[38] Wellek, p. 78.

[39] Quoted in Wellek, p. 78.

4 From Symbolism to Modern Times: Synge and Beckett

The comparison of John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* to Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* is based on the observation that both texts tend to incorporate myth-like qualities. Based on the suggestion that symbols and myths have similar and well-distinguishable characteristics regarding their A/B-structures, it will be attempted to determine whether an actual myth develops during the plays or not by investigating symbols and other indicators of the structures searched for. It will be suggested that while in *Riders to the Sea,* a new myth—and, thus, a new world-order—emerges, this is not the case in *Endgame,* which difference will be also related to the plots of and characters in the plays.

É. Babits has suggested that the A/B structure of symbols is similar to that of other (rhetorical) figures, but in their case, the role of the described element is taken over by the describer, which will appear in the text in lieu of the described. In the above defined terms, it means that the element on layer A is missing, and the describer on layer B *moves* to layer A to take its place.[40]

What makes the A/B structure of symbols particularly interesting to the case of Synge's and Beckett's plays is that, as argued by Babits, the same, B→A movement seems to characterize the A/B structure of myths. Indeed, according to S. A. Tokarev and Y. M. Meletinsky:

> Symbolism is the most important feature of myths, [which] manifests itself in the unclear distinction between subject and object, between object and sign […]. Concrete objects, without losing their tangibility, may become signs of other objects or phenomena, that is, they may replace [represent] them symbolically.[41]

The notion of the non-distinction between object and its sign can be immediately related to the non-distinction between described and describer which makes the B→A movement possible,[42] and their description of the nature of symbolic representation answers the suggestion that a symbol replaces some other element.

[40] An example for this process can be Ady Endre's poem titled *Harc a nagyúrral,* where the 'pig-headed master', originally on layer B, moves to layer A, to the level of the reality of the lyrical I, to take the place of the now missing 'money'. Consider the first line: "The pig-headed master kills me," which shows that the symbolic element is placed beside the lyrical I on layer A; and line 44: "His gold jingled. He laughed." which makes it clear what the symbol has replaced. (Both lines can be found in *Ady Endre Művei,* ed. S. Koczkás and A. Krajkó [n.p.: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1972], 1:56–57, p. 56, p. 57, respectively. They appear here in my translation.) The suggested movement can also be related to R. Ingarden's remarks on symbolization: "1. the symbolized is part of another realm—if one may use this term—than the symbolizer […] 2. the symbolized is only 'symbolized', and it itself cannot appear. By nature it is inaccessible directly; it does not manifest itself." (Roman Ingarden: *Az irodalmi műalkotás [The Literary Work of Art],* trans. Gábor Bonyhai [Budapest: Gondolat, 1977], p. 307, my translation.)

[41] S. A. Tokarev and Y. M. Meletinsky, "Mitológia," in *Mitológiai enciklopédia,* ed. S. A. Tokarev et al., trans. György Bárány et al. (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 1:11–21, p. 1:13, my translation.

[42] This movement and the blurred distinction can be clearly seen, for example, in the myth of Narcissus. In this myth, the origin of the flower (on layer A) is equaled to the body or the blood of Narcissus, which elements, although origin not on the here-and-now layer of the myth, appear to be as real as the flower, as they are placed beside it in space and are related to it via a genetic relationship. Hence the suggestion that Narcissus (or his blood), like a symbol, moves from layer B to A. However, whether he takes the place of a missing element—for example, the origin or the past of the flower—, which is required of symbols, is arguable. (The very same problem arises at the analysis of Synge's play.) Moreover, the proposed B→A movement, although the A/B classification is not wholly equivalent to the signified/signifier dichotomy, can be related to "what Lévi-Strauss says of mythical thought, which, as Franz Boas remarked, constantly creates new worlds, but by reversing means and ends: 'signifieds change into signifiers, and vice versa.' " (Gérard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse,* trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Columbia UP, 1982], p. 6.)

Using the above observations it seems rather uncomplicated to determine whether a new myth is being created during the course of *Endgame* or *Riders to the Sea,* or not: it has to be examined whether elements on layer B move to layer A (therefore becoming symbols), or remain on their level, leaving the play in the original, mythless, but to-be-mythic state.

First, let me consider the similarities between the plays which provide a basis for the comparison. If a to-be-mythic quality is to be attributed to the texts, then they both are expected to represent the pre-mythic, or mythless stage of human existence, too. It also has been suggested[43] that myth was one of the main instruments to understand the surrounding world. If this is so, then the world, in a pre-mythic or mythless state, must present itself as dangerous and inconceivable. It can be shown that it actually does so in both plays.

Notably, in both works, the setting is a room: "Bare interior"[44] in *Endgame,* and a "cottage kitchen"[45] in *Riders to the Sea,* outside which room, in both cases, lies the realm of (literal) death. In *Endgame,* this is expressed directly, by Hamm's declaring twice "Outside of here it's death"[46] and "Beyond is the… other hell,"[47] when feeling the wall that separates the two spaces. In *Riders to the Sea,* this dualistic set-up is not articulated so clearly, but still, when Maurya cries "He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again"[48] at the point when Bartley is at the door, she might be argued to identify being outside as being dead.

The outside–inside distinction is further supported in both works by the importance of windows and of looking out. Many of the shows of the clown-Clov are arranged around this action, as he is continuously forgetting either the steps or the spectacles; Hamm is eager to know every detail that can be seen; and also, in *Riders to the Sea,* Nora and Cathleen are continuously looking out to see the ship which is to carry away Bartley, or to be sure that Maurya is gone, etc.

Based on these observations, it could be suggested that the pre-mythic world, yet non-interpretable and unknowable for the characters, is represented in both plays as the dangerous *outside,* as opposed to the more or less controllable, conceivable and safe *inside* of the houses. According to this suggestion, the continuous effort to collect information about the outside world may be interpreted as an effort to control and to understand it. This facet of this repeated action is more emphasized in *Endgame,* where looking out is the only source of information about the world, as the characters never have the chance of leaving the house. It can be concluded, therefore, that the plays do provide a representation of the pre-mythic world.

Even the style reflects the to-be mythic quality of the plays. Elevated tone characterizes the monologues in *Endgame* (often contrasted with coarse humor), and the whole text of *Riders to the Sea,* in which almost word-by-word repetitions also emphasize the non-everyday use of speech. Compare "NORA: The young priest says he's known the like of it. 'If it's Michael's they are,' says he, 'you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God;' "[49] to "CATHLEEN: […] for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God;"[50] and to "MAURYA: Michael has a clean burial in the far

[43] For example, Tokarev and Meletinsky, p. 1:12.

[44] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame,* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* 7th ed, ed. M. H. Abrams et al. (New York and London: Norton, 2000), 2:2472–2500, p. 2:2472.

[45] John Millington Synge, *Riders to the Sea,* in *The Complete Plays* (New York: Random House, 1960), 81–97, p. 83.

[46] Beckett, pp. 2:2475, 2495.

[47] Beckett, p. 2:2481.

[48] Synge, p. 87.

[49] Synge, p. 83.

[50] Synge, p. 93.

north, by the grace of the Almighty God."[51] Repetitions like these carry a ritualistic quality, which, arguably, direct the reader's attention to the transcendental facet of the tragedy.

It can be seen, therefore, that by employing an expressed distinction between the outside and the inside and by their styles, the plays do create an atmosphere in which the emergence of a new myth—which would make the characters able to understand and control the outside world—is possible. But if this is so, it can be also expected that, as suggested by Tokarev's and Meletinsky's description, at least some points can be discovered in the plays where the distinction between layers A and B becomes blurred.

Indeed, there are some associations triggered by the plays in the cases of which it is hard to determine whether the associated element describes the in-text one or vice versa. It has been widely suggested that the endgame of a game of chess can be associated with *Endgame*,[52] with Hamm as the black king (moves slowly), Clov as a black bishop (as both Hamm and Clov have red faces and Clov moves freely around the room, although with a "stiff, staggering walk"[53]) and Nagg and Nell as two pawns, either black (then Clov and Hamm are waiting for a possible white figure to arrive from outside), or white (as they have white faces, and Clov seems to take Nell during the game). *Riders to the Sea,* in a similar manner, allows the reader to interpret the three women as the Fates (the Parcae) as Cathleen starts to spin at the beginning of the play and Maurya manages to predict the fates of the boys. These possible associations show that both texts, for the first sight, appear to integrate symbolic meanings into themselves from the very beginning, making their A/B structures resemble more and more that of myths.

Having listed some of the characteristics of the plays which make them to-be mythic, now it can be considered whether any of them turns into an actual myth by determining what elements reside on layer B and whether any of them moves close enough to layer A to blur the borderline between the two layers significantly (hence merging them), or even to take over the roles of elements originally placed on layer A.

According to the definition of layer B, those elements are placed on it which are sufficiently remote from the here-and-now of the action and diction on stage to become more a 'vision' than a 'view'. In particular, it can be expected that elements relating a (possibly untrue) story of the past, envisioning a dubious event in the future, or creating an alternative present will all be placed on layer B for the above reason.

In *Endgame,* layer B seems to host mostly retrospective descriptions (i.e. stories of the past) and unfulfilled wishes, that is, alternative presents. One retrospective element is the dialogue between Nagg and Nell, conjuring up the years past: the events on Lake Como,[54] the tailor-story that *made* Nell laugh,[55] or the accident with the tandem in the Ardennes.[56] Hamm also refers to the past; for example, he relates the fate of the painter and engraver: "I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come."[57] Apart from these, retrospective elements, one large part of the text remains which evokes vivid images and is clearly placed on layer B: Hamm's ongoing story.[58] Interestingly, this story does not refer to the past,

[51] Synge, p. 97.

[52] Cf. footnote No. 3 in Beckett, p. 2:2473; see also the utterance "HAMM: Me to play," occurring twice in the play, Beckett, pp. 2:2473, 2:2499.

[53] Beckett, p. 2:2473.

[54] Beckett, p. 2:2479.

[55] Beckett, p. 2:2480.

[56] Beckett, p. 2:2478.

[57] Beckett, p. 2:2487.

[58] Beckett, pp. 2:2489–2490, 2492–2493, 2495.

but neither to the future: it can be interpreted as Hamm's effort to create a more bearable, alternative reality in which he still has control over the events.

Compared to these, vividly visualizable stories, the sentences by which Clov refers to the future seem to lack all concrete and vivid elements; one example can be his sentence "It won't rain."[59] Therefore, it can be suggested that in *Endgame,* layer B is dominated by retrospective elements on the one hand, and elements which are referring to an alternative present, never to become true, on the other.

In fact, it is apparent that in *Endgame,* layers A and B remain strictly separated during the course of the play. Elements referring to the past do not have the potential of being realized on layer A, as a part of the current reality, and the possibility of the only element creating an alternative present, Hamm's story to become true is denied by Hamm himself: when reacting to the only possible visitor in whom the man in his story could materialize, to the appearing boy, he declares: "If he exists he'll die there or he'll come here. And if he doesn't…"[60] In other words, no element on layer B could possibly come close to layer A, creating the effect being looked for.

However, in *Riders to the Sea,* the situation is more promising as the relationship between layers A and B is more complicated. The anticipatory remarks of Maurya, as they, referring to an unclear future, are vision-like, are placed on, or at least are very close to layer B: "It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drown'd with the rest;"[61] "He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left in the world."[62] Later, her remarks become intermingled with the description of the outside world (which belongs more to layer A) in her vision of Michael on the pony. Below, in her rendition of the vision, I indicated in superscripts which layer the given element is placed on:

> MAURYA: I went down to the spring^{A} well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley^{A} came along, and he riding on the red mare^{A} with the gray pony^{A} behind him. […]
>
> MAURYA: […] I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony^{A}, and *there was* Michael^{B} upon it—with fine clothes^{B} on him, and new shoes^{B} on his feet^{B}.[63]

The emphasized *there was* indicates that Michael, and other elements related to him, which reside on layer B, are already placed close to layer A, on top of the gray pony, which always belonged to the here-and-now of the play. This remark also refers to the present and to the future (anticipating the gray pony kicking Bartley into the water) at the same time. Thus, this utterance shows that, in *Riders to the Sea,* the two layers are much closer to each other—they are even mixed to a certain degree—than in the case of *Endgame,* despite the fact that even in that play, as related above, associations could be found which slightly blur the borderline between the layers. Moreover, layer B in Synge's play hosts references to the future, which, unlike stories in *Endgame,* can be realized on layer A later on.

Indeed, the major difference between the A/B structures of the two plays is realized at the moment when in *Riders to the Sea,* "old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold,"[64] the family is informed about Bartley's death and the body is carried in. At this point, the dark future so far described mainly on layer B penetrates (literally) from the *outside*

[59] Beckett, p. 2:2474.
[60] Beckett, p. 2:2498.
[61] Synge, p. 87.
[62] Synge, p. 87.
[63] Synge, pp. 92–93, emphasis added.
[64] Synge, p. 94.

the reality of the stage, which undoubtedly belongs to layer A. This makes possible for Bartley's body (unlike Bartley himself, who more belonged to layer A), representing the truth of Maurya's vision on-stage (thus moving from layer B to A), to become an almost perfect symbol. It can also be argued that the bundle represents Michael (whose story more belongs to the past and therefore, arguably, to layer B) on stage, becoming a symbol on its own.[65]

It can be seen, therefore, that the A/B structure of *Riders to the Sea* undoubtedly has the characteristic of blurred distinction between the two layers, and quite probably involves the B→A movement of some important elements, which makes its structure strikingly similar to that of myths. In *Endgame,* however, the two layers remain separated.

Based on these observations, it can be argued that although both plays appear to yearn for a new, myth-based world-view, it is possible only in *Riders to the Sea* for a new mythic order to develop. *Endgame* is left in its myth-wanting, but mythless state, which ending, probably, suggests the idea that although there is a need for them, myths are already unavailable in and after the era of Modernism.

I shall attempt to further support this conclusion by relating it to the plot of the plays, and by investigating the argued symbolic quality of the body and the bundle in *Riders to the Sea* from points of view different from their A/B structures.

The symbolic quality of Bartley's body and the bundle can be further supported by the way other characters relate to them. That Bartley's body is sacred (even a taboo) and can be related to only by the use of Holy Water (otherwise, Maurya touches only his feet; Nora and Cathleen do not touch him at all, according to the script), while is not surprising, supports the above suggestion. But even the stocking can be argued to be sacred, or otherworldly, as the only way to identify it is counting. V. N. Toporov argues that counting downwards in Hungarian and Russian mythology stands for the destruction of the evil,[66] thus counting upwards (the stitches) might be considered to be conjuration; in this case, that of Michael's figure. Toporov also argues that numbers were (and are) one of the most important means for understanding and describing the outside world and that they often play a main role in mythologies.[67] (Hamm's use of numbers in his story in *Endgame* can be considered to be to the same end. He keeps describing the weather as: "zero by the thermometer," "fifty by the heliometer,"[68] etc.) In short, it seems that the stocking in *Riders to the Sea* becomes as sacred and as symbolic as Bartley's body by the usage of numbers and by the character's behavior toward it.

When trying to relate the emerging myth in the A/B structure to the plot of the plays, the question naturally arises what difference the absence or presence of a newly created myth, or mythic world-view may make for the characters. It is important to note that as Clov and Hamm appear to be waiting for a change, which they would interpret as something positive ("CLOV: If I could kill him I'd die happy;"[69] "When I fall I'll weep for happiness,"[70] etc.), Maurya also seems to wait for something (arguably, certainty), which, when comes with the

[65] Please note that although it could be shown that Bartley's body and the bundle move from layer B to A during the play, it would be hard to establish whether any of them take over the role of a missing element on layer A, as, according to my definition, required of ordinary symbols, both verbal and non-verbal.

[66] V. N. Toporov, "Számok," in *Mitológiai enciklopédia,* ed. S. A. Tokarev et al., trans. György Bárány et al. (Budapest: Gondolat, 1988), 1:233–235, p. 1:235.

[67] The connection between numbers as means for describing the world and counting the stitches in Synge's play was also emphasized by Elaine Scarry, although without a direct reference to myths and conjuration. (Elaine Scarry, lecture on Synge's *Riders to the Sea,* English 162B American and British Theatre, Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4 February 2002.)

[68] Beckett, p. 2:2489.

[69] Beckett, p. 2:2482.

[70] Beckett, p. 2:2499.

news of Bartley's and Michael's death, causes her great relief: "[…] but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain;"[71] "No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied."[72] It seems as though the positive change all three characters are waiting for can be traced in the structures of the plays as the to-be-emerging myth. With the arrival of Bartley's body, Maurya's vision becomes merged with reality, which, in turn, is reinterpreted by the characters, and, possibly, by the audience, who witnesses the movement of the vision from layer B to A. In *Endgame,* although the stage in many ways is set for the arrival of a new order, a conclusion, for which the characters are actually waiting, it never arrives. Naturally, it has been argued that there, a B→A movement (for example, for Clov's whishes to come true) is impossible because of the strict separation of the two layers, which is apparent from the beginning. This way, Beckett's play is never able to break out of the circular dramaturgy. Showing a new world-order, which had been possible for a seeress at the turn of the century, is no longer achievable for a taleteller fifty years later. The belief in the possibility of the creation of new myths, new religions and common values seems to be shattered: although the opportunity is present in *Endgame,* creation does not happen anymore. This suggestion is in accordance with Hamm's literal denial of the existence of a superposed entity capable of creating, that is, God when they try to pray: "The bastard! He doesn't exist!"[73]

The fundamental structural difference between John Millington Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, which, in this case, concerns not the elaboratedness of layers B but the degree of separation of the two layers, again proved to account for many dissimilarities between the plays. It can even be held accountable for the slight differences in tone: coarse humor intermingles with the ritualistic tone only in *Endgame*, where the development of a new mythic order is deemed unfeasible from the very beginning.

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So far, the following suggestions has been established regarding the A/B structures of the four works under investigation: layer A dominates *Robinson Crusoe,* in which novel layer B is close to nonexistent, and is separated from layer A. Layer B appears to dominate *To the Lighthouse,* where the two layers seem to be more closely related as retrospective and non-retrospective passages are far less segregated than in *Robinson Crusoe.* Layer B dominates *Riders to the Sea,* too, where some elements even move to layer A. Layer A and B equally dominate *Endgame,* and they were shown to be separate.

These observations suggest an interesting parallel between the plays and the novels: layers A and B are separated both in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Endgame,* while in *To the Lighthouse* and *Riders to the Sea,* they seem to be intermingled. The fact that they are only slightly merged in *To the Lighthouse,* and no trace of a possible B→A movement could be found shows that the process of incorporation is not finished in the novel, while it seems to be almost complete in *Riders to the Sea.* This is why I categorized *To the Lighthouse* as pre-symbolic.

The suggestion that a basic characteristic of the A/B structure of a text is not an ad-hoc feature as it can be related to other features on other layers, can be supported further by considering a similarity between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Endgame,* the two works having separated A and B layers. Namely, both works, as opposed to Woolf's and Synge's texts, use numbers to describe the world. Defoe often uses approximate or exact numbers for length, distance, etc. Consider, for example: "[…] the first thing I found was the boat, which lay […]

[71] Synge, p. 96.
[72] Synge, p. 97.
[73] Beckett, p. 2:2491.

about *two miles* on my right hand. I walked as far as I could […] to have got to her, but found a neck or inlet of water between me and the boat which was about *half a mile* broad,"[74] or, "[the] fore-castle, which lay before bury'd in sand, was heaved up at least *six foot.*"[75] Beckett also uses numbers, for example, in Hamm's story (some quoted already): "zero by the thermometer", "fifty by the heliometer,"[76] "a hundred by the anemometer,"[77] and Clov can be also argued to describe the outer word by the use of numbers when "*[He looks, moving the telescope.]* Zero… *[He looks.]*… zero… *[He looks.]*… and zero."[78] Also, he intends to measure the center of the room with a tape when Hamm wants him to put the chair in the exact middle.[79] It can be argued that the almost total separation of layers A and B is a sign of either an emphasized interest in material reality, as may be the case in Defoe's novel, or of its parody, as in Beckett's play.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I attempted to illustrate various possible relationships between view and vision in literary works that seem to characterize some artistic periods. But apart from the suggestion that layer B more and more incorporates layer A until the beginning of Modernism, it was also shown on the four works chosen that the fundamental characteristics of these rather large structures, layers A and B, can be easily related to other features of the text, of the plot and action; of time-management, of the use of rhetoric figures, words, etc. There may, naturally, be no direct causality between the related features: it is possible that a given artistic trend controls the A/B structure on the one hand, and the feature related to it on the other. Still, as the connections at times were strikingly direct, the suggestion could be upheld that in coherent works of art, features of the A/B layers signal well-defined properties found on other levels of the text.

The suggestions in this paper, I hope, show the surprisingly many features of a text that can be deduced from its A/B structure, making layers A and B powerful tools for literary inquires. They not only furnished us with a possible definition of materialism in the Woolfian sense, and made an insight to Woolf's new narrative techniques possible, they also made the investigation of *Riders to the Sea* and *Endgame* and their portrayal of a possible creation of a new world order achievable. Also, their radically changing relationship and close connection to symbols might shed some light on the changes of human thinking in time.

[74] Defoe, p. 67, emphasis added.
[75] Defoe, p. 99, emphasis added.
[76] Beckett, p. 2:2489.
[77] Beckett, p. 2:2490.
[78] Beckett, p. 2:2482.
[79] Beckett, p. 2:2481.